Integrated Strategies in Action: **Dja, Cameroon**





Funded by the European Union 





Located in southeastern Cameroon, the Dja landscape, anchored by the Dja Faunal Reserve, ranges over 3,618,400 hectares (slightly larger than the area of Belgium). It is part of the Congo Basin rainforest, the second-largest rainforest in the world.

Surrounded by the expansive Dja River and dense forests, this landscape is home to approximately 330,000 people, some of which are Indigenous Baka communities living within the boundaries of the Dja Faunal Reserve. The reserve contains a rich diversity of life including more than 1,500 known plant species, 107 mammals including forest elephants, gorillas, chimpanzees and leopards) and more than 320 bird species. However, significant challenges, including poaching, unsustainable agriculture, commercial logging and mining, and infrastructure development threaten the landscape. This is leading to deforestation as well as habitat loss and fragmentation.

AWF has been working with local partners and the European Union as an anchor donor to implement a holistic conservation strategy that includes protected area management, land-use planning, sustainable agriculture practices, and conservationbased livelihoods. As part of our people-centered focus, we have pioneered a rights-based approach, integrating principles of human rights in conservation to safeguard the welfare of local communities and Indigenous people. We are also working to increase responsive private sector investment in the landscape's larger biodiversity economy. Nancy Caroll Draper Foundation



By the Numbers

Monitored **WILDLIFE POPULATIONS** in the Reserve: **STABLE**

78% **()** INCREASE IN LOCAL INCOMES among AWF livelihood program participants

35 ECOGUARDS with rights-based training

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Our Strategies

- Increase the effectiveness of protected area management
- Improve governance and management of natural resources
- Build awareness of the benefits of conservation
- Promote a biodiversity economy and conservation-based livelihood opportunities
- Empower local communities and Indigenous people through a rightsbased approach

AWF in Action

Supporting Conservation-Based Livelihoods & Sustainable Agriculture

To enhance incomes, improve food security, and protect the landscape from deforestation, AWF programs provide sustainable livelihood alternatives like cocoa farming and microenterprises based on nontimber forest products (NTFPs). We are also engaging buyers in cocoa and NTFP value chains to source from local sustainable producers.

- We provide small-scale subsistence farmers with cocoa seedlings and training on nature-positive crop cultivation to improve yields. During ECOFAC
 6 (2017 - 2022) 46 000 seedlings were provided. In 2025 around 200,000 seedlings will be distributed. These seedlings are produced locally in the nurseries established in the communities. We also facilitate knowledge-building to ensure fair negotiations between producers and buyers. Participating farmers agree to refrain from participating in poaching, illegal wildlife trade, and illegal logging.
- We partner with women in local communities to increase their incomes and local food supply through microenterprises involving non-timber forest products (NTFPS) such as bush mango, djangsang, moabi, and mbalaka. Participants are

Increasing the Effectiveness of Protected Area Management

To guide overall strategy, AWF supported the revision of the Dja Faunal Reserve Management Plan to define and secure reserve boundaries and sustainable landuse activities around the reserve. As part of securing reserve boundaries, we support wildlife authorities with tools and training to monitor wildlife, respond to threats, and manage habitat. We also supported the establishment of eco-guard bases at four priority sites within the reserve.

- We introduced GIS-based tools for field-based data collection and reports to inform where to deploy eco-guards. A companion tool gives eco-guards and protected area managers near real-time satellite information on threats and wildlife movement. This technology has significantly improved eco-guards' and managers' abilities to plan patrols, understand wildlife movement, and site outposts in the reserve.
- We are improving wildlife monitoring and antipoaching efforts, including training eco-guards,



trained in sustainable gathering, preparation, and sales. Raw materials are used to manufacture soap for personal use and sale for commercial cosmetics production.



investing in reserve infrastructure, and installing 140 infrared-triggered cameras across the reserve.

• We sensitized local communities around the Dja Faunal Reserve on the reserve's boundaries and allowable activities inside and around the reserve.

Respecting Rights and Creating Solutions with Indigenous Communities

The Baka people, known as the Guardians of the Forest, are an Indigenous community whose rights are integral to conservation efforts in Dja. Their deep connection to the forest and traditional knowledge are invaluable. To ensure their rights are protected, AWF is implementing a rights-based conservation approach that includes training eco-guards and sensitizing Baka community members to community rights and access to forest resources. It also includes strategies that reduce community pressures on the reserve. For example, due to habitat loss and conservation restrictions, the Baka community of Bifolone can no longer rely on hunting as their primary source of protein. With our support, the village established fish farming as a sustainable protein source.

- AWF provided training, equipment, financial assistance, and 3,500 young catfish for the fishponds.
- 4,000 kilograms of fish have been harvested for community consumption, and profits from selling fish have allowed villagers to purchase other food items and seeds for the community garden.

What's Next

- Developing strategic partnerships with businesses interested in sourcing sustainably produced cocoa, palm oil, and non-timber forest products
- Ensuring effective management of the Dja Faunal Reserve while promoting the participation and economic development of people living in and around it
- Continuing rights-based trainings with eco-guards, protected area managers, police, and judicial officers and sensitization trainings with local communities to ensure human rights are respected across conservation activities
- Providing technical support to reduce wildlife crime and improve criminal investigations

Funders

European Union: NaturAfrica (2024-2028) Natura Sud-Est Dja European Union: NDICI Africa (2023-2028) Natura Sud-Est Dja European Union: ECOFAC 6 (2017-2022) Natura Sud-Est Dja Nancy Caroll Draper Foundation United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Partners

Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife

Ministry of Defence

Ministry of Justice

Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development

Ministry of Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development

Decentralized Territorial Authorities

Grassroots Community Organizations

Traditional Chieftaincies

Tropical Forest and Rural Development (TF-RD) Program

Local Communities, including the villages of Ajane, Ayéné, Bemba, Bifolone, Bindom, Bodjuou, Bouma, Djouo, Ekom, Etou, Kanyol, Malen I, Malen II, Malen IV, Maleoleu, Mekas, Mintoum, Nemeyong, Nkol Ekoul, Nkoulaze, Schouam



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